

Jay Davis  
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LD 178

Good morning Senator Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Jay Davis, I'm from Belfast, and I strongly support LD 178 for two compelling reasons.

First, I think incarceration has a simple, single function — to provide resources that will enable a convicted person to return to society better than when they were jailed. Maine is making steps, small ones, toward becoming an enlightened corrections provider, and Parole is a wise move in that direction.

My second reason follows that: When an incarcerated person can convince the good minds on the Parole Board that he or she has taken responsibility for their acts and are ready to move on, they should be released on Parole. In order to demonstrate their changed behavior, they must work through the hopefully ambitious programs provided by the jail or prison. Parole is an incentive to create the transformative carceral experience that works so well in other countries and so often fails here.

My experience with imprisonment comes largely through my work as a mentor at the Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center in Belfast. Most of those I worked with had come from the state prison, often after long years behind bars, and were classified as moderate or high risk to reoffend, largely because of substance use disorder. Several of my mentees told me that going to jail saved their lives. But staying in jail was a counter-productive and expensive waste of time, for themselves, their families and society.

The re-entry center has lots of programming, and figures I've seen show a recidivism rate less than half of those who leave state prison. I think a few more re-entry centers replacing county jails is another constructive move like re-establishing Parole.

I am pleased to see the bipartisan list of co-sponsors of LD 178 and urge you all to give it a positive vote out of committee so we can keep moving forward with re-establishing Parole.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

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